

**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**



REPRESENTATIVE JASON ROJAS
HOUSE MAJORITY LEADER

Committee of Higher Education and Employment Advancement
Public Hearing Testimony
In favor of House Bill 5115
March 7th, 2022

Chairs Elliott and Slap, Ranking Members Haines and Witkos, and distinguished members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of **H.B. 5115: AN ACT REQUIRING A PLAN TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF CHILD CARE CENTERS ON OR NEAR EACH CAMPUS OF THE REGIONAL COMMUNITY-TECHNICAL COLLEGES AND STATE UNIVIERSTIES.**

First, I want to thank the Office of Early Childhood and the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities for all the great work that they are already doing in this space. This bill is intended to draw attention to the need to invest in childcare programs on college campuses both as a way to develop the childcare workforce, and a way to enable more students to attend school.

Education is a vital resource that can dramatically improve an individual's standard of living, health, and job opportunities. But access to education is not feasible for every resident. Alongside the financial strain of attending a college or university, and physical or mental health issues that can interrupt studies, time is one of the greatest barriers to degree completion. Depending on enrollment and degree difficulty, the average undergraduate student can expect to spend anywhere from 25-40 hours a week on coursework and studying.

For many, when parenting is factored in, the commitment to pursue a degree becomes even more daunting, if not impossible. Today, over 22 percent of all undergraduate students are parents, and over half of those students will drop out before earning their degree. Many cite a lack of time to study or inability to find childcare as the main hurdle on the path to earning their degree. By increasing the number of childcare centers, as well as expanding childcare programs at universities to allow for drop-in services on evenings and weekends, we can begin to provide more assistance to nontraditional students.

In addition, having childcare centers located on or near college campuses, allows the college to offer expanded program in Early Childhood Education. The "Lab Schools" that are currently operating on several campuses illustrate the potential of this program. As we continue to be hopeful about federal funding to support childcare programs, investing in and expanding lab schools will be an important way for our state to make sure we have a workforce sufficient to meet expected demand.

I urge favorable consideration in moving this bill forward. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Rojas".

Jason Rojas